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Some Ghislaine Maxwell jurors initially doubted accusers, juror says

By Luc Cohen



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Jeffrey Epstein associate Ghislaine Maxwell sits as the guilty verdict in her sex abuse trial is read in a courtroom sketch in New York City, U.S., December 29, 2021. REUTERS/Jane Rosenberg

NEW YORK, Jan 5 (Reuters) - During jury deliberations after the trial of British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell, some jurors initially doubted the accounts of two of her accusers, one member of the jury said on Tuesday night.

This juror, who asked to be identified only by his first and middle names, said some of the jurors had issues with the credibility of witnesses known as Jane and Carolyn, two of the four women who testified that Maxwell set them up with the late financier Jeffrey Epstein as teenagers.

He said that after some of the jurors questioned the accuracy of the two women's memories, he decided to share his own experience of being sexually abused as a child. He said that he remembered most important elements of what happened to him, but not every single detail. That swayed some jurors, he said.

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"When I shared that, they were able to sort of come around on, they were able to come around on the memory aspect of the sexual abuse," Scotty David, a 35-year-old Manhattan resident, told Reuters in a phone interview. He gave an earlier interview to The Independent.

He added that coming to a unanimous verdict "wasn't easy, to be honest."

"There's a room of 12 people and we all have to be on the same page and we all have to understand what's going on," he said. "And then we have to agree. So that's partly why it took so long."

Maxwell, 60, was convicted on Dec. 29 of recruiting and grooming teenage girls for sexual encounters with Epstein. The conviction followed five full days of deliberations.

During jury selection, hundreds of prospective jurors were given questionnaires asking, among other things, if they or anyone in their families had experienced sexual abuse, court records show.

For those who answered yes, the judge in the case asked during follow-up questioning if it would affect their ability to serve as a fair or impartial juror, the records show.

Scotty David said he did not recall being asked about his experience during follow-up questioning, known as voir dire. He said he "flew through" the initial questionnaire and also did not recall being asked on the form about personal experiences with sexual abuse, but that he would have answered honestly.

The U.S. Attorney's office in Manhattan wrote a letter to U.S. District Judge Alison Nathan on Wednesday asking her to conduct an inquiry into the juror's description of being a victim of sexual abuse and his responses to the questionnaire, in light of the juror's statements to outlets including Reuters.

"While the court instructed jurors that they were free to discuss their jury service with anyone of their choosing, some of the statements, as related in the media, merit attention by the court," the letter read.

Maxwell's defense attorneys did not respond to requests for comment about Scotty David's account of the jury deliberations or his responses to questions during jury selection.

Jurors were not identified by name during the trial. Scotty David shared with Reuters a photograph of an instruction sheet from the court telling him to return on Nov. 29 for the final day of jury selection. His juror number, which is listed on the sheet, was among the 18 chosen as jurors or alternates.

Maxwell's defense lawyers argued that the women's memories had been corrupted over the years and that they were motivated by money to implicate Maxwell.

Scotty David said several jurors initially were not sure whether to convict Maxwell on the sex trafficking count, which is backed up by the testimony of a woman named Carolyn who said she was 14 when Epstein began abusing her in 2002.

But he said some jurors changed their minds after hearing the personal story of one juror who said she grew up poor. Carolyn said she dropped out of school in seventh grade and was paid \$300 - sometimes by Maxwell - each time she gave Epstein an erotic massage. Carolyn said she used the cash to buy drugs.

"For Carolyn, it took one of the jurors sharing their story of growing up in the same socioeconomic background," he said. "She grew up poor, and said had there been an Epstein or Ghislaine in her neighborhood, some of the girls would have fallen prey to them as well."

Scotty David said he was skeptical of the defense's argument that Maxwell was being treated as a scapegoat for Epstein, who died by suicide at age 66 in a Manhattan jail cell while awaiting trial on sex abuse charges.

"She participated, she was complicit, she did nothing to stop it," he said.

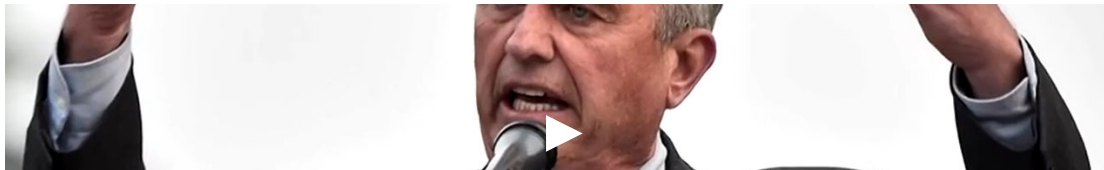
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